

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace paragraph [0027], with the following:

[0027] The inventors of the present invention, to obtain the strain of bacteria having the above-mentioned characteristics in nature, diluted samples obtained from natural habitats using an anaerobic dilution buffer ("Chonaikin no sekai", Tomotari Mitsuoka, pp. 322, published by Soubunsha, 1980, hereinafter referred to as the reference 1), applied it onto a BL agar medium flat plate (the reference 1, pp. 319), and incubated it anaerobically at 37° C. Then, among the colonies obtained, strains which showed morphological characteristics of bifidobacteria and were Gram positive of rod, club or Y-shaped cell appearance under microscopic observation of applied specimens were collected and streaked onto a BL agar flat plate to repeat anaerobic incubation using the same method described above. In this manner, pure isolated strains were obtained. Then, tests for fermentation and survival rate during conservation of the strains were conducted using the following methods, and about twenty strains having excellent results were obtained. After this, a test for gastric juice tolerance was performed, and strains which showed excellent survival rate in artificial gastric juice of pH 3.0 were obtained. Among them, a strain which was most excellent was deposited under the Budapest Treaty on the International Recognition of the Deposit of Microorganisms for the Purposes of Patent Procedure to the International Patent Organism Depository, National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), located at AIST Tsukuba Central 6, 1-1, Higashi, 1-Chome Tsukuba-shi Ibaraki-ken 305-8566. The deposit was made on October 31, 2001 and the strain was given accession number FERM BP-7787. The taxonomic description of the *Bifidobacterium longum*\_strain is shown below.